

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

The President's News Conference With President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria

April 30, 2018

President Trump. Thank you very much. Thank you. Today I'm honored to host President Buhari of Nigeria at the White House, right here in the beautiful Rose Garden. President Buhari, I want thank you very much for traveling to Washington for these important discussions. It's a true pleasure to welcome you to our Nation's Capital.

Nigeria is the largest democracy in Africa. As I conveyed to President Buhari in our discussions, the United States deeply values and appreciates Nigeria's role as a strong, democratic leader in the region. The United States is currently working to expand trade and commercial ties with African nations, including Nigeria, to create jobs and wealth in all of our countries. We hope to be the economic partner of choice for nations across the continent and all around the world. And you see what's happening with respect to trade and the United States. We are being respected again.

I hope all African countries and countries throughout the world, that we also will be supporting you and that they will likewise support us in our bid, along with Canada and Mexico, for the 2026 World Cup. We will be watching very closely, and any help that they could give us in that bid we would appreciate.

I'm pleased that Nigeria is one of our largest trading partners in the region, and we look forward to growing our trade relationship based on the principle of fairness and reciprocity. But we give Nigeria well over \$1 billion in aid every year. And we have already started talking with the President about taking down the trade barriers—very substantial barriers—to the United States trading with Nigeria. So we think that we are owed that.

President Buhari has also taken several steps to fight corruption and improve the Nigerian business climate. And most of all to me—and again—is ripping down those trade barriers. These measures will make it easier for Nigeria and the United States companies to invest. And we will be investing substantially in Nigeria if they can create that level playing field that we have to very much ask for and maybe demand.

I especially want to thank President Buhari for Nigeria's partnership and leadership in the fight against terrorism. He's been a real leader. Nigeria was one of the first African nations to join the coalition to defeat ISIS, and Nigerian forces are currently leading regional efforts against ISIS in West Africa and doing very well, as we have.

Nigeria is also leading African nations in the fight against Boko Haram and—another ruthless jihadist terrorist group. You've been reading about them. They kidnap the young girls and young women, many of whom never are seen again. It's tough stuff. This summer, it was my honor to meet with two brave young women, Joy Bishara and Lydia Pogu, who were kidnapped by Boko Haram in April of 2014 at the secondary school in Nigeria. I was deeply moved by their inspiring stories of courage, resilience, and survival. They really were two amazing young women.

I told Joy and Lydia, my administration is committed to combating both jihadist terrorism and the scourge of human trafficking and smuggling. In the world today, there is more human trafficking than there has ever been, if you can believe this. They use the internet better than

almost anybody is able to use the internet. So think of it, in a modern world, in this world, there's more human trafficking and slavery than at any time in the history of this world. It's hard to believe.

To protect Americans from these menaces, I have called on Congress to close deadly immigration loopholes that are exploited by terrorists, traffickers, and criminals. Just look at our southern border and our weak and obsolete immigration laws. They are obsolete, and they are weak, and they are pathetic. And there's no country in the world that has laws like we do. They've got to change, and they've got to change now for the safety of our country.

We're also helping our Nigerian partners by facilitating intelligence cooperation and providing training and military equipment to Nigerian forces. For example, we recently sold Nigeria 12 U.S. A-29 Super Tucano aircraft—it's a great aircraft—in the first-ever [major]^{*} sale of American military equipment to Nigeria. These new aircraft will improve Nigeria's ability to target terrorists and protect civilians.

Finally, we're deeply concerned by religious violence in Nigeria, including the burning of churches and the killing and persecution of Christians. It's a horrible story. We encourage Nigeria and the federal, state, and local leaders to do everything in their power to immediately secure the affected communities and to protect innocent civilians of all faiths, including Muslims and including Christians.

Mr. President, thank you again for visiting the White House and being with us today. Nigeria is a valued partner and a good friend. I look forward to working closely with you to deepen our cooperation and forge an even closer partnership. The United States is committed to working alongside Nigeria as we seek a future of strength, prosperity, and peace for both of our countries.

Mr. President, thank you very much. Thank you.

President Buhari. Mr. President of the United States of America, ladies and gentlemen of the media, it has been a pleasure and honor to visit Washington, DC, at the kind invitation of President Donald Trump.

Nigeria and the United States share a long history of close and cordial relations which encompass political, economic, military, social, and cultural cooperation. Our two countries maintain a strategic partnership for peace and security, conflict resolution, as well as a global fight against terrorism. We also share common features as secular, federal states practicing a similar democratic model of governance and committed to the universal values of fundamental human rights and freedoms: free enterprise, social justice, and rule of law.

President Trump and his team and myself and the Nigerian team discussed issues related to security, trade, governance, human rights, and humanitarian crises. We congratulated the leaders of the North and South Korea on their historic summit, and we applauded them for the positive commitment they have made towards denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. President Trump deserves a great deal of credit for his statesmanly role in transforming so dramatically the course of events in that region.

We also congratulated the United States Government on the important role it played in the defeat of ISIS, although some of the remnants have found their way to the Sahel region. We recognize the strong United States support in our fight against terrorism and also

^{*} White House correction.

appreciated very much the United States agreement to sell 12 Super Tucano A-29 warplanes and weapons to Nigeria to effectively fight terrorism.

To contain the spate of insurgency in Nigeria, the federal Government has adopted a multisectorial approach involving related Government agencies to address the social, economic, and political dimensions, while the armed forces of Nigeria assist the civil authority to provide security and maintain law and order.

As part of efforts to address emergent cases of insurgency in the country, the Nigerian military adopted counterterrorism insurgency approach, codenamed Operation Safe Corridor, to deradicalize, rehabilitate, and reintegrate willingly surrendered Boko Haram members into the larger society. This program is currently embarking on a number of projects, including skill acquisition centers and integrated farms comprising poultry, fish pond, and greenhouse farming, among others.

A number of international partners, including the International Organization for Migration, have contributed to the success of Operation Safe Corridor. We indicated that we will appreciate whatever support we could also get from the United States. We express gratitude to the United States support in the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the northeast of Nigeria, as well as humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced persons, through agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development and other international partners.

The United States of America has been, to date, the biggest contributor to the humanitarian response. And last year, it gave approximately half-a-billion United States dollars in cash and in-kind contributions through the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations. This has mainly supported protection activities: health, food assistance, and shelter.

We are doing all we can to secure the release of the remaining abducted schoolgirls from Dapchi and Chibok. In this context, we will continue to welcome United States collaboration in intelligence gathering, hostage negotiations, and information sharing. The Government is taking necessary steps to promote the peaceful coexistence of herdsmen and farmers by focusing on boosting security and enforcing legislation that will guarantee borders and farmers' access to land.

I extend sincere congratulations to President Trump and his Government on the impressive performance of the United States economy under his watch. Our aim is to diversify our own economy by focusing on agricultural and food security, power and infrastructure. We have cut the importation of rice by 90 percent, thereby saving a significant amount of money.

We very much welcome increased United States investment in Nigerian economy, especially the nonoil sector. Economic relations between Nigeria and the United States are anchored on three major instruments, namely the binational commission, trade and investment framework agreement, and the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. The binational commission, in particular—comprising bilateral, political, economic, governmental, and humanitarian partnership—is a basic economic framework for engagement between our two countries.

Nigeria's trade volume with the United States stood at 6.07 billion United States dollars according to 2016 statistics and comprised 4.76 billion United States dollars, also, of Nigerian exports to the United States and 1.894 billion United States dollars exports to Nigeria. We urge greater effort to increase these figures substantially.

We thank the United States Government very much for cooperation we have received in our effort to recover stolen funds. Our two governments have put the machinery in place for their respective Attorney Generals to collaborate in ensuring the return to Nigeria of over 500 million United States dollars of looted funds siphoned away in banks around the world.

In this connection, we congratulate the United States Government on launching a Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, which was spearheaded by the United States Department of Justice's Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering. We hoped that we could continue to count on United States support in this area.

The Government of Nigeria remains deeply committed to the principles of human rights, as well as promotion and protection of people's freedom, even in the process of fighting terror. We commit to ensure that all documented cases of human rights abuses are investigated and those responsible for violation held responsible.

I thank you very much for listening.

President Trump. Well, thank you, Mr. President. Thank you very much. Thank you, sir.

Steve Miller of the Washington Times, please. Washington Times. Thank you, Steve.

Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I had a two-parter on immigration. Last week, in the Supreme Court case over your travel ban, the lawyers for the opponents said that if you would simply apologize for some of your rhetoric during the campaign, the whole case would go away. And I was wondering if you would be willing—

President Trump. I don't think it would, number one. And there is no reason to apologize. Our immigration laws in this country are a total disaster. They're laughed at all over the world—they're laughed at—for their stupidity. And we have to have strong immigration laws.

So I think if I apologize, it wouldn't make 10 cents worth of difference to them. There's nothing to apologize for. We have to have strong immigration laws to protect our country.

Central American Migrants Seeking Asylum in the U.S./Immigration Reform/Border Security

Q. And looking to the future: The caravan has arrived at the U.S. border.

President Trump. We've been watching it. We've been watching it, Steve.

Q. And I'm just wondering, in your opinion—or of your estimation—what percentage of those people do you believe are deserving of asylum in the U.S.?

President Trump. Well, I won't get into percentages. But we are a Nation of laws. We have to have borders. We don't have borders, we don't have a country. And I've been watching for weeks as the caravan came up. And you know, the Mexican laws are very tough on immigration, extremely tough. And it started out with way over a thousand people—I guess now it's down to about a hundred—going all through Mexico. People don't realize what a big country Mexico is. But it came down by a lot.

And now we're working on the border with the worst laws any country—no matter where you go, all over the world, they can't even believe it. And we're doing the best we can with it. But we have to have changes in Congress, and we have to have it quickly.

We need a wall, number one. And you see that right now. You know, where they are—even though it's not a particularly good wall and even though a small percentage can climb to the top, they have to be in extremely good shape. But a small percentage can climb that particular wall. We have a wall that's much more difficult.

But if you didn't have that, you would have thousands of people just pouring into our country. You've got to have a wall. And we need border security, and we will have border security. As you know, we're sending many, many National Guardsmen down to the border—most of them are already there—and that's having a big impact. But we need a change in the law. Catch-and-release is ridiculous. If they touch our property, if they touch our country, essentially, you catch them, and you release them into our country. That's not acceptable to anybody. So we need a change in the law.

Q. Mr. President, when you were sitting down in the Oval Office with President Trump, who ran on not wanting to be the policeman for the world, what kind of arguments did you make to convince him to continue a military presence for the U.S. in your country? And what arguments did you make to him? How receptive was he?

President Buhari. I can't understand what you mean by United States presence in my country. They sent a training team, based on their experiences, to train our officers at some of our training institutions and move to the crisis area to see how well the trainers are performing. I think this is one of the best things the United States could do for us to stabilize the country.

U.S. Foreign Policy/Trade

Q. And he agreed with that?

President Buhari. I do, very much so. That's why I thank him for it.

Q. Thank you.

President Trump. Well, we more and more are—because it's a very fair question—we more and more are not wanting to be the policeman of the world. And we're spending tremendous amounts of money for decades on policing the world, and that shouldn't be our priority. We want to police ourselves, and we want to rebuild our country. And the President understands that. And they've come a long way. They're doing a great job. We're contributing to that job, but they have done a great job.

What we do want to do, though, is open Nigeria and other countries up to trade, because we have spent, over the last decade, a number that's so large you wouldn't even believe it. And I think we'll be treated in a reciprocal fashion now, as of today. So I think that's going to happen.

And I have great respect for the President. Okay?

Q. Thank you.

President Trump. How about Jordan Fabian? Where's Jordan? Jordan. The Hill.

Q. Thank you.

President Trump. Thank you.

Iran/Israel

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to ask you about Iran. The Israeli Prime Minister just gave a speech very critical of their nuclear program. I wanted to ask if you have

made up your mind to pull out of that deal. And if you do pull out of that deal, do you think—are you worried that it sends the wrong message to North Korea, as you seek to enter nuclear talks with Kim Jong Un?

President Trump. No, I think it sends the right message. You know, in 7 years that deal will have expired and Iran is free to go ahead and create nuclear weapons. That's not acceptable. Seven years is tomorrow. That's not acceptable.

So no, if anything, it's proven right what Israel has done today with the news conference. And Prime Minister Netanyahu just gave a very—I don't know if everybody has seen it, but I got to see a little bit of it. And that is just not an acceptable situation. And I've been saying that's happening. They're not sitting back idly. They're setting off missiles, which they say are for television purposes. I don't think so.

So we'll see what happens. I'm not telling you what I'm doing, but a lot of people think they know. And on or before the 12th, we'll make a decision. That doesn't mean we won't negotiate a real agreement. You know, this is an agreement that wasn't approved by too many people. And it's a horrible agreement for the United States, including the fact, Mr. President, that we gave Iran \$150 billion and \$1.8 billion in cash—Nigeria would like some of that—\$1.8 billion in cash and \$150 billion. You know what we got? We got nothing. We got nothing.

So that doesn't mean I wouldn't negotiate a new agreement. We'll see what happens. But I think, if anything, what's happening today and what's happened over the last little while and what we've learned, has really shown that I've been 100 percent right.

Africa

Q. And, President Buhari, I want to ask you: You're the first leader from sub-Saharan Africa to visit President Trump here at the White House. Did you address his reported comments from early this year when he reportedly used vulgar language to describe African nations?

President Buhari. Well, I'm very careful with what the press says about others than myself. I'm not sure about, you know, the validity or whether that allegation against the President was true or not. So the best thing for me is to keep quiet.

President Trump. We didn't discuss it. [*Laughter*] And you do have some countries that are in very bad shape and very tough places to live in. But we didn't discuss it, because the President knows me, and he knows where I'm coming from. And I appreciate that. We did not discuss it.

Mr. President, you can ask a question.

President Buhari. Yes, that lady is already up. Yes.

Nigeria-U.S. Relations/Sale of Military Aircraft to Nigeria

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Giuliana. Mr. President Trump, I would like to know: Nigeria is in dire need of the Tucano aircraft to tackle the problem back home. Will you be kind enough to release at least two before 2020 to enable the country to tackle the situation in the country? And how soon will you be visiting Nigeria?

President Trump. Well, I would like to visit Nigeria. I'd like very much to visit Nigeria. It's an amazing country. And in certain ways, I hear from the standpoint of the beauty of a country, there's no country more beautiful. So I would like to.

And the first part of your question, I couldn't hear what you were saying. Go ahead.

Q. The helicopters.

President Trump. Oh, helicopters?

Q. Yes.

President Trump. Oh, oh. We love helicopters. He likes them more than I do. He likes buying helicopters. But he is—and they're buying a lot of helicopters. Helicopters——

Q. We want to know how soon——

President Trump. Very soon.

Q. ——you'll be releasing them to the country.

President Trump. Yes, very soon. We're getting it approved. Part of the problem was that you weren't allowed to buy helicopters in our country, and now you are. I worked that out so that now you can buy the helicopters that you want. They weren't allowed to buy the helicopters in our country for various reasons, which, frankly, were not good reasons. But now they get them, and they get them very quickly. And they are the best helicopters anywhere in the world. We make the best military equipment in the world. And our friends can now buy that equipment.

Mr. President.

President Buhari. Thank you very much.

President Trump. Did you have a question for the President?

Q. President Trump—my question is to President Trump.

President Trump. Thank you. [*Laughter*]

Corruption in Nigeria

Q. The fight against corruption is one of the major achievements that the Nigerian Government has presented to the world. And the records show that United States of America is one of the major destination countries of illicit funds and assets from Nigeria. To what extent did you discuss the need to repatriate these funds back to Nigeria to fund critical infrastructure, to cut down funding for terrorism, and also to reduce our illegal immigration from Nigeria to your country?

President Trump. Yes. We have actually discussed all of those topics at length over the last period of time. And in terms of corruption, Nigeria has a reputation, as you understand very well, for very massive corruption. I also know that the President has been able to cut that down very substantially. We talked about it; he is working on it. And they have made a lot of progress, and I think they will continue to make a lot of progress.

We have a lot of people in this country and, frankly, the country itself, that invests in Nigeria. So cutting down on that corruption element and a corrupt element is very important to us. And the President will be able to do that.

President.

Nigeria-U.S. Trade

Q. And to Mr. President—to President Buhari: The United States import of crude oil from Nigeria has considerably gone down. Did you discuss the need for the U.S. to increase the import of crude oil from Nigeria?

President Buhari. No, I can't tell the United States what to do. But luckily for us, we have good market for our crude oil elsewhere. But the progress made by United States in technology is largely—is actually frightening for such a mono-economy. I hope technology will allow them to use our crude for its quality for petrochemicals—[inaudible]—vis-a-vis the ones they are getting from shale.

Thank you.

President Trump. I think maybe more than anything else, what we discussed today was agricultural products going into Nigeria, which Nigeria wants. But we have certain barriers that don't allow that to happen. So for the good of our farmers—U.S. farmers—and for the good of Nigeria and all of Africa, it's very important that we are able to sell our great agricultural products into Nigeria. And that will happen, and we're going to be working on that right away. Okay?

Thank you all very much. Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

North Korea

Q. Mr. President, will you meet Kim at the DMZ, sir?

Q. [Inaudible]

President Trump. It's possible. It's very possible.

Q. Is the DMZ another location you'll discuss—[inaudible]? [Laughter]

President Trump. Well, it was an interesting thought. And I had that thought. We're looking at various countries, including Singapore. And we are also talking about the possibility of the DMZ—Peace House/Freedom House.

And there's something that I thought was intriguing. I think that some people maybe don't like the look of that, and some people like it very much. I threw it out today as an idea. I also told President Moon, and through President Moon, we connected with North Korea. There's something that I like about it, because you're there. You're actually there—where, if things work out, there's a great celebration to be had on the site, not in a third-party country.

So we are looking at the possibility of doing it in that location. We're also looking at various other countries, including Singapore. I will say this, the good news: Everybody wants us. It has the chance to be a big event.

Q. [Inaudible]

President Trump. And the United States—I was talking to John Bolton about this a little while ago—the United States has never been closer to potentially having something happen with respect to the Korean Peninsula that can get rid of the nuclear weapons, can create so many good things, so many positive things, and peace and safety for the world.

So we'll see what happens. You know, I often say, "Who knows?" Who knows? Maybe a lot of things change. But Kim Jong Un, who has been very open and very straightforward so far—I can only say, again, "so far." But he's talking about getting rid of the site, which was their big

site. He's talking about no research, no launching of ballistic missiles, no nuclear testing. And he has lived up to that for a long period of time, a longer period of time than anybody has seen.

So we are looking at that as a potential site, yes. I think it would be very interesting. I think it would be a great celebration if it works out well. And if it doesn't work out well, that's the way it goes.

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—the timeframe—*

Q. Are you still confident the summit will happen? Is there anything that can—

President Trump. Oh, yes, I think the summit is going to happen. They very much want it. We certainly would like to see it. I think the summit will happen. And personally, I think it's going to be a success. But we'll see. I will say this: If it's not a success—if it's not a success—

Q. How do you define success?

President Trump. He's got to get rid of the nuclear weapons. If it's not a success, I will respectfully leave. It's very simple.

Thank you all very much. Thank you.

Q. What about the timeframe? Have you—*[inaudible]**—the timeframe?*

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:39 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Moon Jae-in of South Korea; National Security Adviser John R. Bolton; and Chairman of the Korean Worker's Party Kim Jong Un of North Korea. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. President Buhari referred to Minister of Justice Abubakar Malami of Nigeria; and U.S. Attorney General Jefferson B. Sessions III.

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